

ZooBooks

Baby Animals



Why are babies cute? Scientists tell us that cuteness has definite survival value for many babies, since parents often cannot resist the appealing looks and helpless cries of their offspring. Cute babies are likely to get better care than they might otherwise get.

This seems to be especially true of baby mammals and birds. Like human babies, they often have what it takes to make you love them at first sight—large glowing eyes, big clumsy feet, soft fur or downy feathers, a trusting and helpless look.



African Lion Cub

Newborn White-Tailed Deer



Owl Chick



Orangutan



Raccoon



Blue-footed Booby

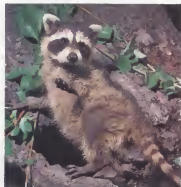


Mountain Gorilla

The world is filled with babies.

The only places that animals are not found on earth are the hottest, coldest, or highest places. Everywhere else, if man has not destroyed their environment, different types of animals live. . . and have babies.

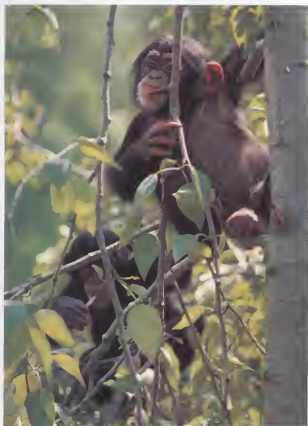
Some animals occupy a large area, or range, while others are limited to very small areas. But whatever the range may be, the animals who live there are suited to the nature of the land and the climate—and this goes for their babies as well. If it is cold, newborns may have fur. If it is hot, they may be naked. Later on, as the weather changes or they migrate to new areas, they may change to suit new conditions. In general, nature gives every baby the best chance it can to survive, wherever it is born.



Some animals, such as this baby raccoon, benefit from living close to man. They are good at hiding themselves, and they like to eat food that people throw away. Raccoons, skunks, and opossums are often found living in the middle of cities.



The ranges of some animals have been increased a great deal by man. Wherever people go, they bring their farm animals with them. Cows are now found all over the world, in just about every place that is warm enough for farming.



Many animal babies grow up in forests. They are safer up in the trees than they would be on the ground, because fewer animals can catch them. Baby chimpanzees like to swing from branch to branch, and they enjoy eating leaves.



Five hundred years ago, there were no horses in North or South America. They were brought over from Europe by the first settlers, and quickly increased in numbers. Soon, there were almost as many horses as people.





Animal babies can be born in very cold places. These gentoo (JEN-TOO) penguins start life close to the South Pole. Their fuzzy feathers keep them warm, even when they swim in the cold water. They will never fly, because their wings are not big enough—but they will become wonderful swimmers.



Up near the North Pole, the summers are short. During this brief warm period, Arctic foxes are born. They cannot see for the first few weeks of their lives, so they stay in an underground den. Their mothers stay close to them, and their fathers bring food.

Like other Australian marsupials, a baby koala will spend its early life in its mother's pouch. As they grow older, koalas venture out onto their mother's backs. Eventually they learn to climb tall trees on their own.



High in the mountains of South America, there are flat places where grass grows. Young llamas (YAH-MUZZ) start eating grass soon after they are born. Their long shaggy hair keeps them warm in the cool mountain air.



Babies come in all sizes. Some animals are so small at birth that you can hardly see them, while others are so large that it seems strange to call them babies at all. Size is one thing that determines how a baby animal will react when danger threatens. Small babies find it easy to hide, and will usually stand still or scamper for cover. Larger babies, which cannot hide under a leaf, will usually run or will seek the protection of adult animals in a herd.



Mice are very, very tiny when they are born. They weigh only one gram, and have no hair. But they start eating right away and grow very fast. By the time they are three months old, their weight can increase as much as 30 times!



Many animals are much smaller at birth than they will later become. A North American lynx kitten is only a ball of fur that you can hold in your hand. When full grown, it can weigh more than 40 pounds (18 kilograms).



When a baby giraffe is born, it is already as big as a man. It stands 6 feet (163 centimeters) tall, and weighs about 115 pounds (53 kilograms). Young giraffes follow their mothers everywhere, and do everything that their mothers do.



Some animals are small at birth and never grow much bigger. The golden marmoset is about as wide as a man's finger when it is born. When fully grown, it will probably weigh less than 9 ounces (260 grams), and will be only about 8 inches long (200 millimeters).

Some animals start big—and get much bigger. A baby elephant weighs about 200 pounds (91 kilograms) and is over 3 feet (1 meter) tall at birth. When it is fully grown, it may weigh over 10,000 pounds (4536 kilograms) and be more than 9 feet (3 meters) tall.



Some babies get better care

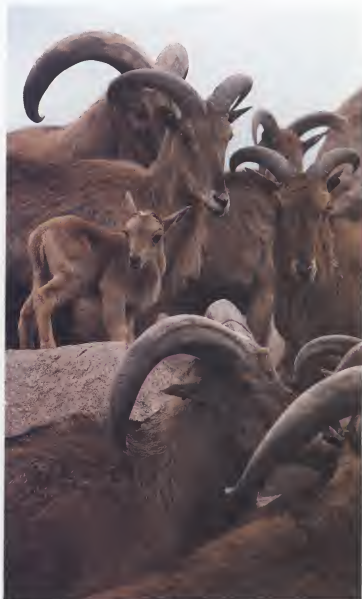
than others, because they need more help to survive. In general, if an animal is going to be guided mostly by instinct as an adult, it will get very little help from its parents. But if it must learn many things in order to be successful as an adult, it will spend more time with its parents.

Fish and reptiles, for example, are usually born with all the physical abilities and knowledge they will need. They don't need much help from their parents, and they don't usually get much. Often, in fact, parents will lay eggs and go away before the young even hatch.

Mammals and birds, on the other hand, must usually learn more skills to live. Often, they are totally helpless at birth and would surely die if their mothers didn't take care of them. As they grow up, they learn from watching their mothers. In nature, baby animals always obey their mothers, because their lives could depend on it.



Female bears are fine mothers. They spend a lot of time teaching their cubs how to catch food, and will fight hard to protect their young from harm. This brown bear mother is showing her cubs how to catch fish, one of a bear's favorite foods.



Baby aoudads (OO-DADS) stay close to their mothers. All members of the aoudad herd watch out for any animals that might try to eat the youngsters.



Young lions like to show their love for their mothers by nuzzling and licking them. Lion cubs may stay with their mothers for several years.





Sometimes, mother animals must leave their young alone while they search for food. To protect themselves, the babies hide and stay very quiet.

Crocodiles look nasty, but females take very good care of their young. If danger threatens, a mother crocodile will pick up her babies in her mouth and carry them to safety.



Some animals are good mothers in some ways, and not so good in other ways. Pelicans will bring their babies plenty of fish to eat. But if a predator tries to eat one of their young, pelican mothers may do nothing to protect them.

Young cheetahs must learn how to hunt. Their mother takes them hunting with her, and spends endless hours demonstrating how they should stalk their prey.



Monkeys can be very good parents. Mother monkeys often carry their babies on their backs, and take them to places where good food is to be found. Like human mothers, they can spend a lot of time cleaning their children and teaching them how to behave.

MOUNTAIN GOATS





Some animals grow up faster than others, because fast growth helps them to survive. The world of a baby animal can be a dangerous place. There are many other animals that would like to eat the small creature, and in many places, if a baby remains helpless for too long, it will surely be eaten. In general, animals born in unprotected places, or whose parents cannot protect them from predators, grow up faster.

Ducks are born ready to go. As soon as they dry off, they are able to walk, swim, and eat solid food. But it takes several months before they are able to fly.



Baby snakes look like small versions of their parents when they hatch. They grow so fast that they may shed their skin seven times during their first year of life to make room for their growing bodies.



Most cats are helpless when they are born. Their eyes do not open for a week or more, and they must stay hidden inside a den for their protection.



Many types of birds are born without feathers. They are unable to move around, and must be protected by their parents for weeks or even months.



Young herd animals, such as zebras, must be able to keep up with the moving herd soon after they are born. If they fall behind, they will almost certainly be eaten by lions or other predators. For this reason, young zebras get up on their feet within minutes after birth. Within an hour, they are able to run.



Some animals, like rabbits, grow up very fast. Rabbits may leave their mothers only 6 weeks after they are born. And within 6 months, they can have babies of their own.



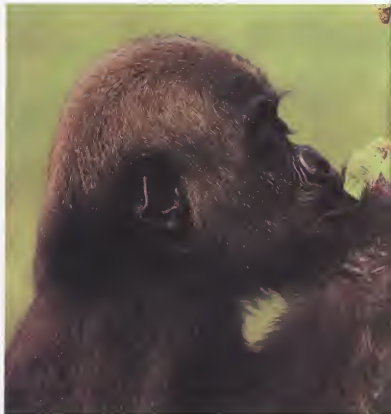
GRIZZLY BEARS



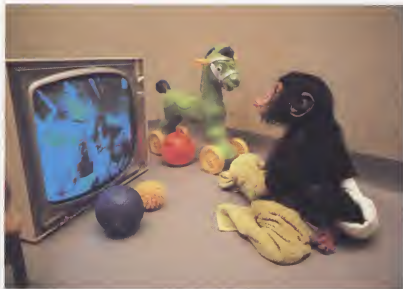
The future of baby animals is up to us. Many baby animals will not live to grow up, and many baby animals will not even be born if we do not help. Wild animals have as much right to live as we do, but thoughtless people are destroying the animals by destroying the wild lands in which they live.

People are cutting down trees to make room for houses and farms. People are polluting the air and the water that animals must have to live. People are hunting wild animals and capturing them for no good reason. As a result of all of these things, the numbers of many types of wild animals are getting very small.

Zoos and wildlife groups are doing everything they can to help animals survive in their natural homes—and to help them live in protected areas if their natural homes are totally destroyed. Scientists are doing research to find out what each type of animal must have to live. They are studying ways to increase the number of babies that are born. If we love wild animals and want to have them in our world, we must help scientists and zoos to do all of these things.



No one knows if gorillas will be able to continue living in the wild in Africa. The land where they live is being changed to make room for farms—and there is less and less room for gorillas. Happily, many baby gorillas are being born in zoos, where they will be safe.



For the first 3 or 4 years of their lives, human babies and chimpanzee babies are about equal in their intelligence. Like human infants, young chimps need a lot of attention. They love to play with toys, and chimps in some zoos have playrooms, complete with television sets.



One hundred years ago, the American bison was almost totally destroyed by too much hunting. Just in time, special areas were set aside as bison preserves. After years of protection, the bison herds are growing large again.

In certain ways, baby animals are better off in a zoo than they would be in the wild. They get the same kind of medical care that human babies get, and they are protected from animals that might hunt them in the wild.

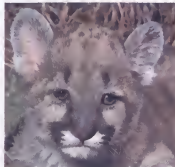


A few years ago, it looked as though tigers would die out in the wild. But they are now protected, and in some places they are increasing in numbers.



For reasons that no one fully understands, animal mothers in zoos will sometimes refuse to raise their babies. Zoo keepers take over the job and give the babies as much love and care as their mothers would usually give them.

Many wild animals, like this baby mountain lion, are still in great danger. They will only survive if people stop hunting them and stop destroying the wild lands in which they live.









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ON THE COVER: A Harp Seal

Created and Written by
John Bonnett Wexo

Art Director
Mark Hallett

Photography Editor
Charles Van Valkenburgh

Production Art Director
Joan M. Hubert

Typographer
George Olshevsky

Zoological Consultant
Charles R. Schroeder, D.V.M.
Director Emeritus
San Diego Zoo &
San Diego Wild Animal Park

Scientific Consultants
Mark S. Rich, M.S.
Curator of Mammals
San Diego Zoo

Arthur Crane Risser, Ph.D.
Curator of Birds
San Diego Zoo

Charles R. Schroeder, D.V.M.
San Diego Zoo

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